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ABSTRACT

This publication documents the successes of a Mississippi Arts Commission program, entitled the "Artist Is In!". The program was created to provide arts experiences in rural and inner-city communities which have historically had little access to the arts. The program produced other benefits: spurred economic development and tourism; improved educational opportunities; increased civic pride; provided opportunity to address social issues; enhanced cross-cultural understanding; and raised esteem for arts among business professionals and public officials. The publication provides a detailed overview of 9 successful programs and summaries of 16 other projects, all of which use a combination of teachers, artists, and craftspeople to teach children about art and cultural heritage. Also included are two how-to sections with practical advice on beginning and maintaining an arts-in-the-community program. (DQE)

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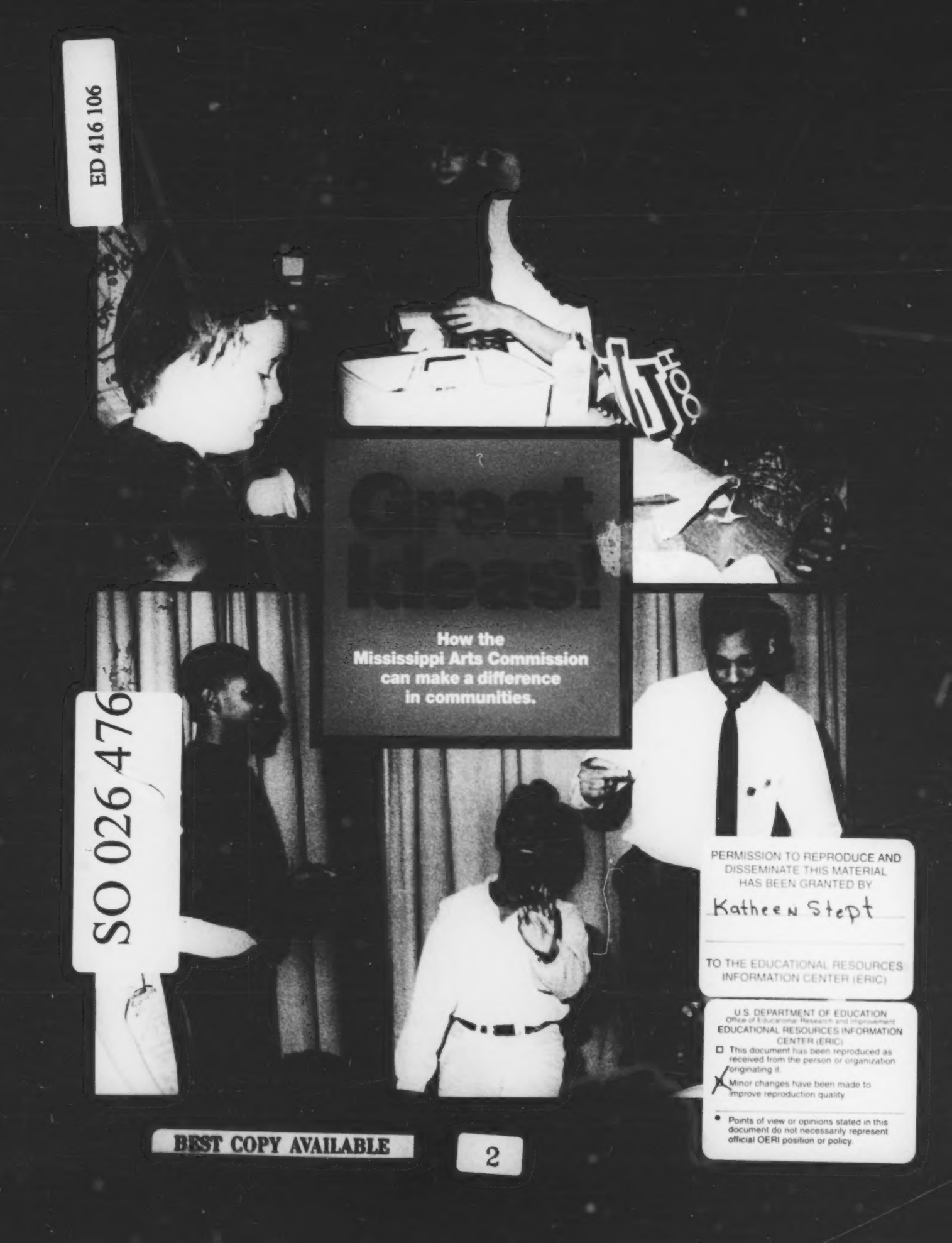

Great Ideas!

How the Mississippi Arts Commission can make a difference in communities.

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Great Ideas

In Mississippi, the Artist Is In! This Mississippi Arts Commission program, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, has put the power of the arts to work in communities throughout the state.

Its success is documented in Great Ideas.

Since its beginning in 1991, the Artist Is In! has provided arts experiences in 25 rural and inner-city communities which have historically had little access to the arts. It has given Mississippians new opportunities to broaden their understanding of the state's traditional arts and crafts, visual arts, and performing arts – and to have a wonderful time in the process! Most of these programs will continue, thanks to partnerships developed as part of the project.

The Artist Is In! produced other important benefits. Communities' leaders have described how the projects spurred economic development and tourism, improved educational opportunities, generated civic pride, addressed important social issues and enhanced cross-cultural understanding.

It also increased respect for the power of the arts among business professionals and public officials.

This success can be duplicated.

Turn the page for our scrapbook of photos and quotes, an inspiring overview of nine programs which use the arts to achieve outstanding results in small towns across Mississippi. Find details of these efforts in *Success Stories* and summaries of other Artist Is In! projects in *More Success Stories.*

Tips pulls together important lessons from Mississippi organizers of Artist Is In! *Building on Success* explains the project's beginning – and reveals its exciting future.

We hope *Great Ideas* will help you jump start efforts in *your* community, alert you to opportunities and challenges, and inspire your creativity – for the arts truly have the power to change communities.

Jane Crater Hiatt

Executive Director, Mississippi Arts Commission

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"Before our retreat some choir members had never held a piece of printed music before.

The auditorium was packed with a racially mixed audience of almost 300."

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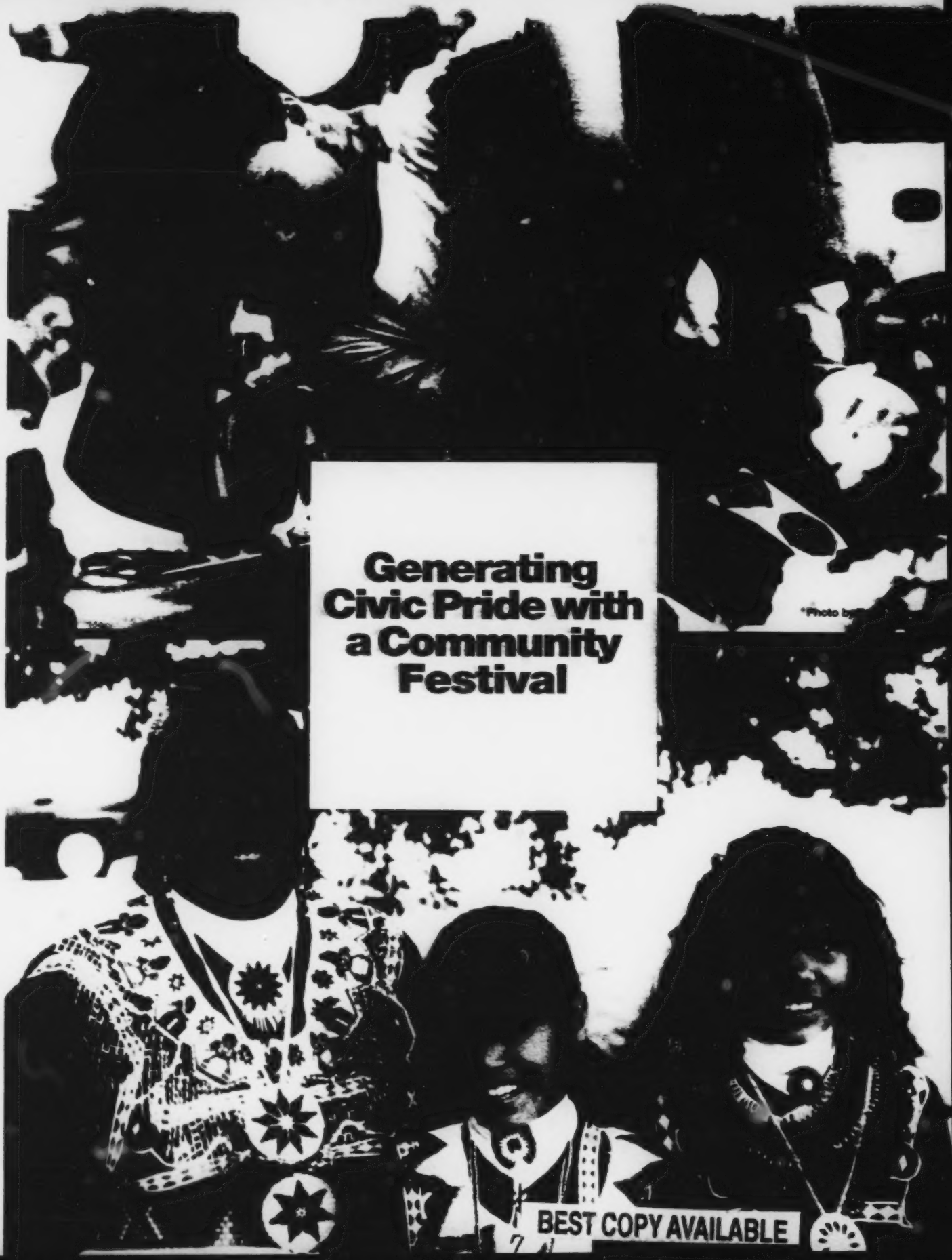

Generating Civic Pride with a Community Festival

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"More than
35 sponsor's tables
were sold... generating
$2,600.

All partners saw it as
something good
for the city,
something that would
foster civic pride."

"My biggest surprise is that the program is forming a life of its own, one that is really responsive to the needs of the community."

Revitalizing Neighborhoods Through the Arts

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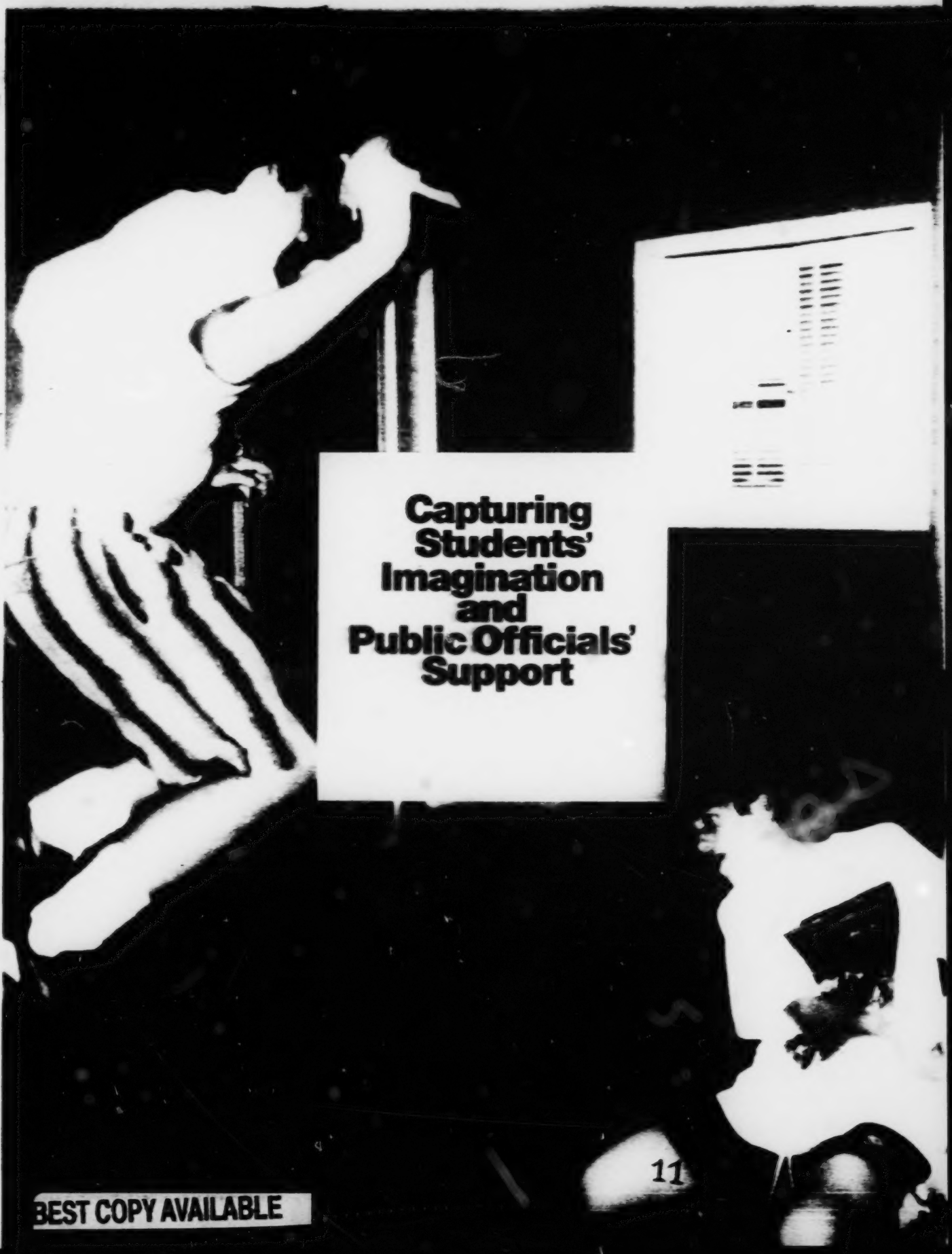

Capturing Students' Imagination and Public Officials' Support

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"I send letters or invitations for each event and activity to every supervisor, every alderman, and every school official.

I send pictures too."

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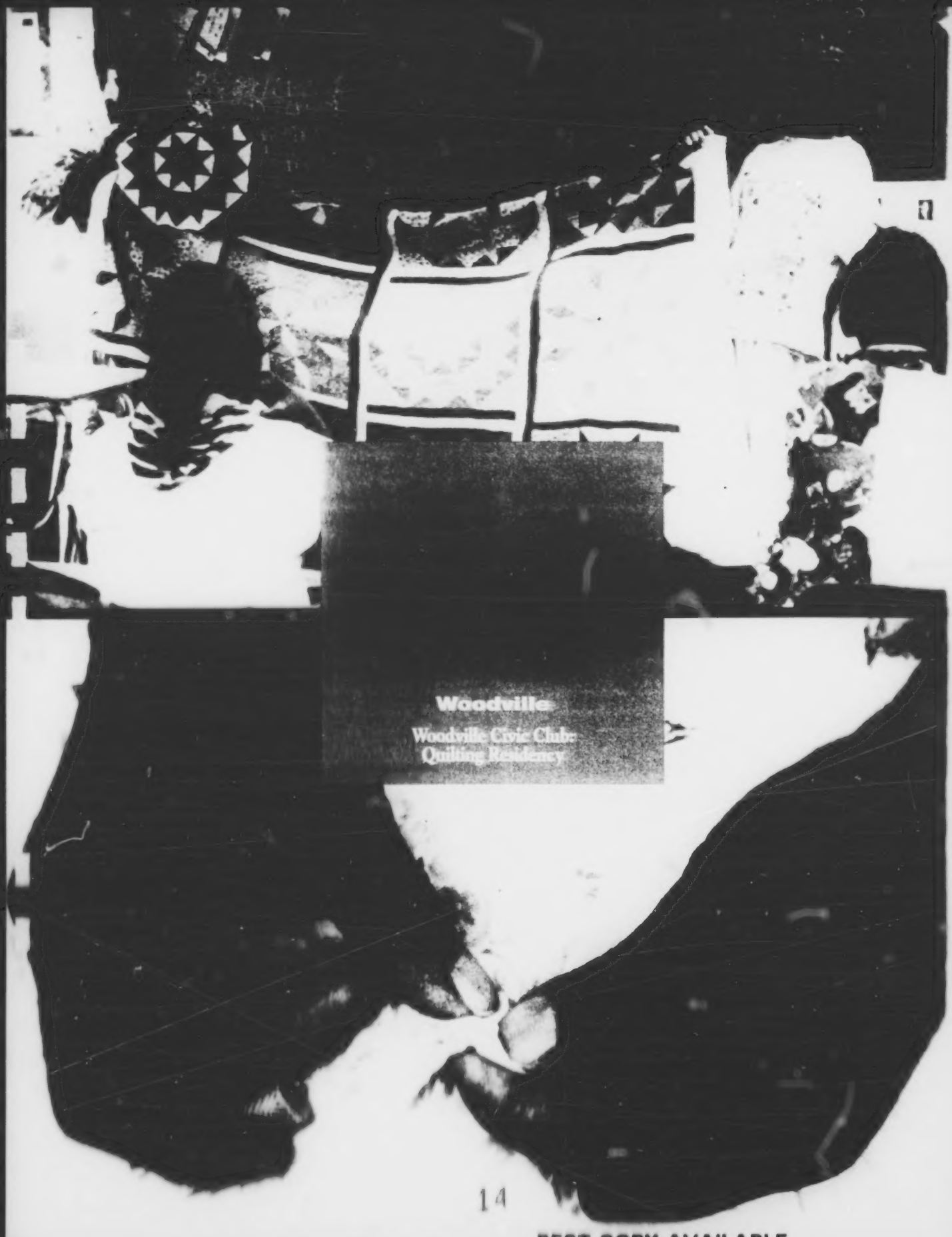
"The way she talked about her quilting was from the heart.

I was so touched when she described a quilt she had made from her father's neckties."



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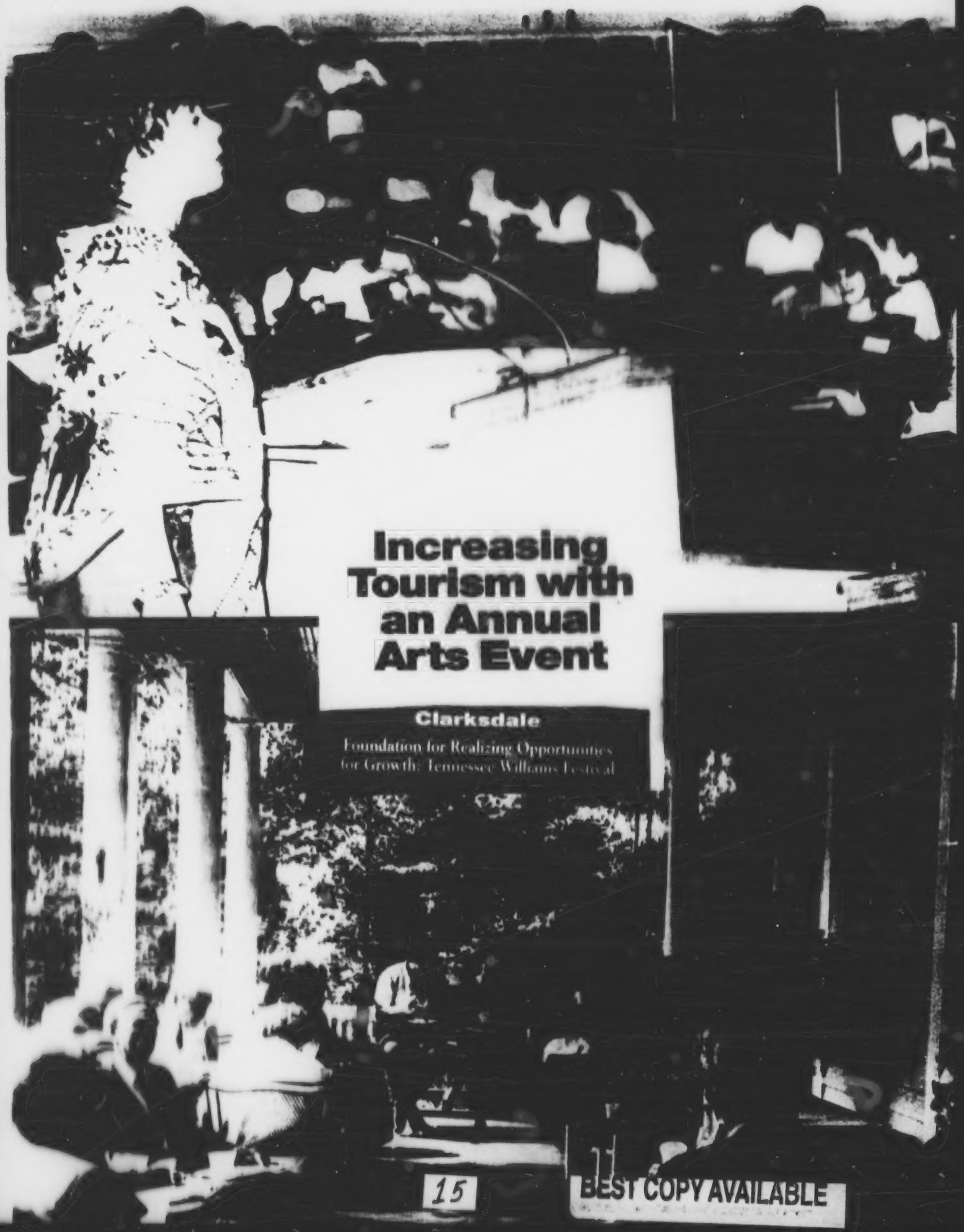

Increasing Tourism with an Annual Arts Event

Clarksdale

Foundation for Realizing Opportunities for Growth: Tennessee Williams Festival

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"Future festivals will continue to play a strong role in the development of the tourism industry in Cohoma County, one of the poorest counties in Mississippi."

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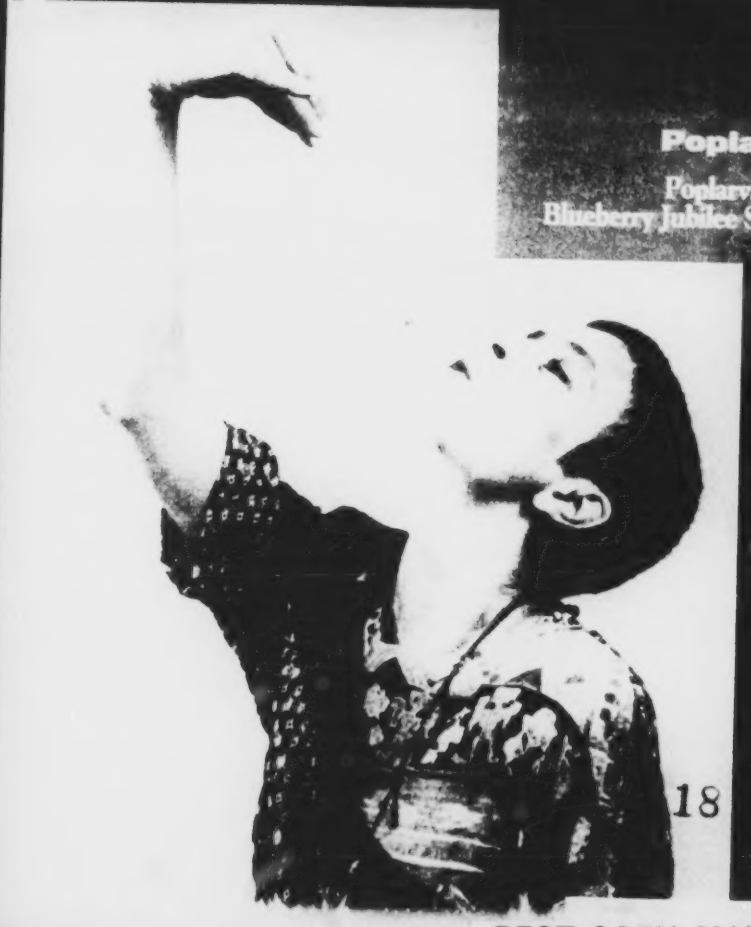
"I came to Poplarville
a student and left
a storyteller."

Poplarville

Poplarville PTA:
Blueberry Jubilee Storytelling Festival



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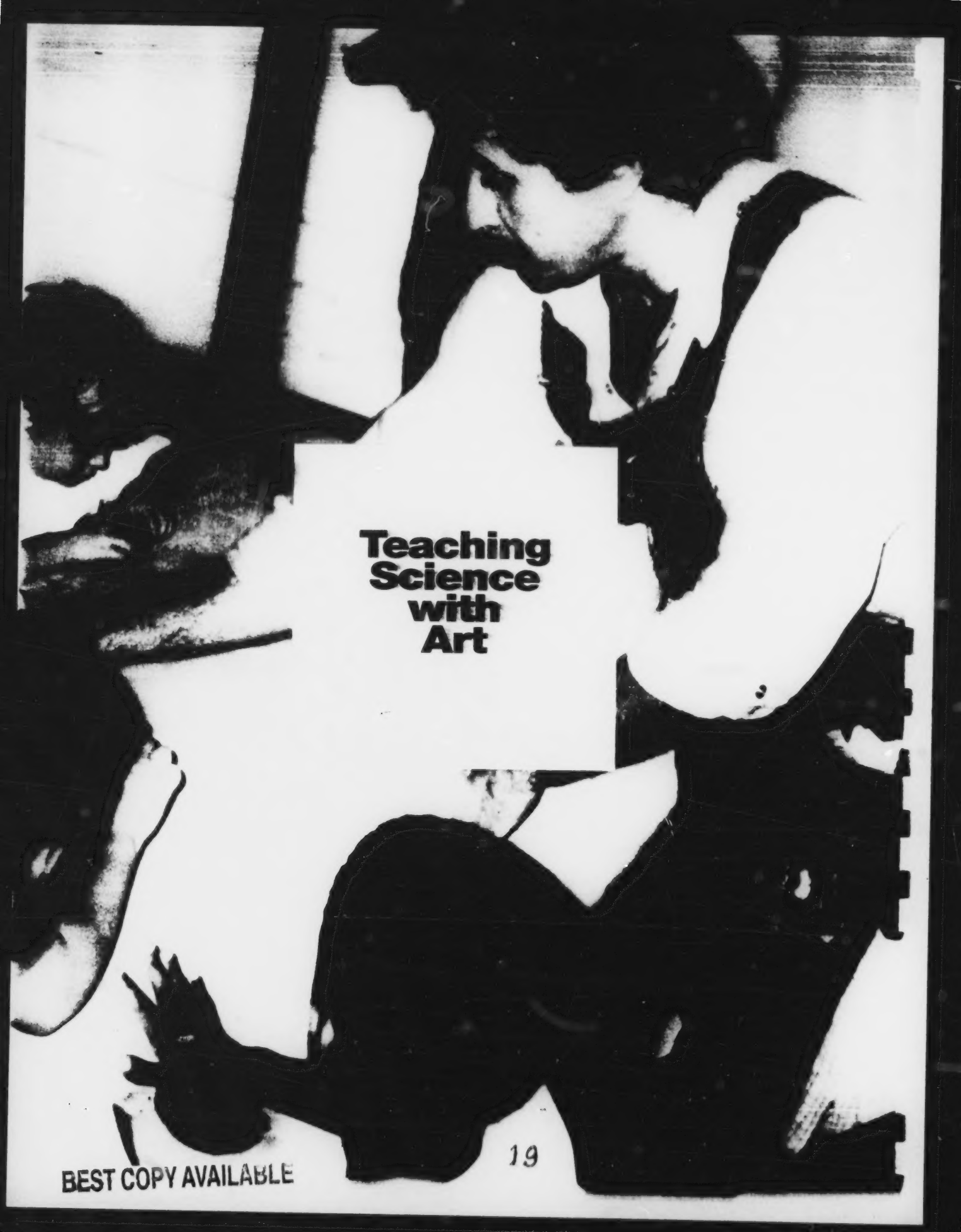

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"Whenever I meet a new artist and I'm interested in their work, I say... 'This is beautiful, but do you also work with children.' "

"When you have an
artist who has
the interest and respect
of children
you can successfully
address a number
of social issues
through the arts."

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Teaching Science with Art

The Mud Dauber's Project
George Ohr Arts and Cultural Center
Biloxi

Artist-in-residence continues the legacy of Biloxi's mad potter, George Ohr, with demonstrations at Saturday workshops.

It is a balmy spring afternoon at Central Elementary School, located in a low-income area of the coastal town of Gulfport. Students have spent the morning taking standardized tests. In Mrs. Smith's gifted and talented classroom, sculptor Andres Hill works with a group of fifth and sixth graders making plaster relief sculptures. A cameraman from a local television station interviews Mrs. Smith and several students and shoots footage for potential broadcast on the evening news. The students are animated as they discuss their work with Hill. He has developed a strong rapport with the class, and Mrs. Smith notes that he is an excellent role model for the students.

Hill discusses the chemical reaction taking place as he mixes the plaster students will use for their final relief sculptures. Mrs. Smith enthusiastically relates how the artist has integrated lessons in history, science, math and language arts into his week-long residency. On the last day, students will present their sculptures in a special exhibit for parents and friends; each student will also be required to tell about the inspiration for his or her piece.

Hill's residency is part of the Mud Daubers project, a pilot project for artist residencies developed by the George Ohr Arts and Cultural Center in Biloxi. Formerly a branch of the Mississippi Museum of Art (located in Jackson), the George Ohr Arts and Cultural Center is named for artist George Ohr, known as "the Mad Potter of Biloxi." Ohr often referred to himself with the initials M.D. (Mud Dauber), hence the name of the program. The Mud Daubers project includes not only residencies in pottery and sculpture, but also in painting and printmaking.

Museum director Marjorie Gowdy designed the program with input from local teachers, who emphasized the need for students to have direct contact with artists. The original proposal included three artists in residence: a potter, a printmaker and a painter. When the grant funds finally came through, the potter Gowdy had intended to hire was not available. Stretching the large stipend, Gowdy hired six artists—potters and sculptors—to do a number of smaller residencies. The change in the program plan was fortuitous: Gowdy was able to find out in what settings and with what types of groups each artist was most comfortable, and she was able to match the needs of various groups requesting residencies with the interests and abilities of a particular artist. Gowdy acknowledges that this was challenging; she had to be much more flexible in terms of scheduling. However, she insists the program is richer for the participation of so many different artists.

The Mud Daubers program has encompassed a variety of classes and residencies. Artists have traveled to schools in five counties. Classes at the museum have served four elementary schools with primarily low-income students. The schools

cannot afford transportation to the museum, but all are within walking distance. Saturday workshops and classes in painting and pottery have been popular with adults as well as children. In one painting class with artist Joseph Pearson, adults got so excited that they brought friends and even children with them to class, turning the class into a family painting workshop. A summer camp is planned for the summer of 1994, with two one-week sessions for 50 campers, ages 9-16. The camp is free. An artist-in-residence, assisted by local artists and trained volunteers, will work with campers.

Gowdy estimates that the pilot program for Mud Daubers will reach 2400 students and more than 700 adults, well over the 2000 initially predicted. The program has proven so accessible and popular that she can no longer fill all requests for residencies that are coming in. Gowdy is constantly seeking out additional local artists who would be willing to work in residency settings. She laughingly reports, "Whenever I meet a new artist and I'm interested in their work, I say 'This is beautiful, but do you also work with children?' "

The Mud Daubers program has received strong support from a number of partners, including the City of Biloxi, the local Chamber of Commerce and Biloxi Main Street Association, the Biloxi-Ocean Springs Junior Auxiliary, and public and private schools in Biloxi, Gulfport, and other neighboring cities and counties. Residencies have been well-covered by local television stations and newspapers. Gowdy is grateful for the publicity, coming at a time when the museum is separating from its parent organization in Jackson and forming its own identity. Not only is she seeking funding to continue the Mud Daubers program; she must also secure substantial city and private support to keep the museum open. The prospects look rosy, however, thanks to public funds now available as a result of the new casinos on the Gulf Coast.

Gowdy has a deep commitment to the Mud Daubers program and especially to the many needy children it serves. She recalls working one day in a pottery workshop with a little boy who was very intense. Frustrated with the pot he had made, he walked away without finishing it. A few minutes later he came back, and with help and encouragement from Gowdy tried once more and completed a very nice pot. The child's teacher told Gowdy that because he was emotionally disturbed and got angry easily, no one took much time with him. She thanked Gowdy for her assistance. Gowdy can never forget that little boy and the pleasure and satisfaction he received from making a pot. If she has her way, the Mud Daubers program will be around for a long time, helping many, many children build self esteem through creating art.

Addressing Social Issues Through the Arts

Summer Arts Program for Disadvantaged Youth
Hattiesburg Arts Council
Hattiesburg

Sports Camp athlete expresses new-found creativity at African drumming workshop.

At the Boys and Girls Club in Hattiesburg in the summer of 1993, a group of young girls listens intently to Deborah Ferguson, African-American artist, dancer and storyteller. Ferguson does not happen to be telling stories or talking about art at this particular moment. She is discussing with the girls their responsibilities as young women, how to handle the various situations they will encounter as they grow up, how to respect themselves and others, and how to do what is best for their own well being. "This chat was Ferguson's idea," notes arts council director Patty Hall. "She took the time to talk to the director of the Boys and Girls Club about the needs of the children. When you have an artist who has the interest and respect of children, you can successfully address a number of social issues through the arts."

The Hattiesburg Arts Council used grant funds from the **Artist Is In** program to support a number of arts activities targeting low-income and at-risk youth in inner city locations, public housing projects, a newly-annexed city neighborhood and the Boys and Girls Club. One of the program's goals was to help strengthen the family unit, and evening concerts for families were part of this effort. Hall recalls an evening concert in the Palmer's Crossing community that featured a jazz group: "Several members of a neighborhood gang came in to check it out. They started out in the back row, uninvolved and scornful. Before intermission they were in the second row with their caps turned around, excited and involved in the music. They were even eager to help the musicians pack up at the end of the evening."

Patty Hall saw the arts touch lives all summer. Workshops for children incorporated visual arts, creative dramatics, creative writing and dance, all with a focus on the cultural heritage of the participants. Creative writing assignments included interviewing an elderly relative about what life was like when he or she was the child's age. Interpretation of family histories was used for visual art works, dramatic presentations and dance movements.

Senior citizens in two housing projects were encouraged to participate in a quilting program that involved planning with younger members of their family the quilt design and fabrics to be used. Master quilter Hystercine Rankin helped to start two quilting clubs in the housing projects, now supported by the City's Recreation Department.

The best arts administrators look for opportunities to link the arts with other—sometimes unlikely—partners. Patty Hall is a master of this skill. Serving on the City's Recreation Board, she heard of a National Youth Sports Program for 300 at-risk students that was to be held in town at the University of Southern Mississippi. Hall approached the camp leaders about a collaborative venture, and they were very

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receptive. Using funds from the **Artist Is In** grant, Hall took artist Deborah Ferguson to the sports camp. In a hot gymnasium the basketball players took a break from their dribbling and shooting drills to learn a few new moves with Ferguson. Hall chuckles at the memory of 6'6" basketball players stumbling over African dance steps. Leaders of the sports camp are already asking for an artist to work with students in the next camp!

Patty Hall excels in developing all kinds of partnerships. The summer arts program was also supported by the Hattiesburg Recreation Department, the Hattiesburg Housing Authority, and the Boys and Girls Club. Hall made sure everyone in City government was aware of the program and its benefits. She even took artist Deborah Ferguson to a City Council meeting! A new City task force report has stressed the importance of **arts activities** for at-risk students, and Hall knows that this will lead to more support from the City and the business community. Because of the program's visibility and success, the City Recreation Department is committed to funding arts activities in the summer of 1994, including a return residency in Hattiesburg by Deborah Ferguson. Patty Hall's partnerships are paying off!

Capturing Students' Imagination and Public Officials' Support

Arts Introduction Program for Union County Youth
Union County Cooperative Extension Service
New Albany

4-H students explore puppetry in an expressive arts workshop.

County extension agent Linda Mitchell read about some drama workshops to be held in Memphis, including one in stage combat. As part of her program supported by the **Artist Is In** grant, she took a van load of high school students from New Albany to Memphis for the workshops. Two sophomore boys were really excited about their experiences in the drama workshop. Mitchell also knew that they were failing their high school English class. She suggested that they might tell their English teacher about their experiences and ask to act out a scene from a Shakespeare play, complete with stage combat. They did, and the teacher gave them extra credit for their efforts. The students earned additional credit by performing and videotaping another play, and now they have passing grades in English! Mitchell sent a letter to the workshop leader, thanking him and assuring him that the "true measure of how good something is is how much it is used." By that standard, the workshop was very good indeed.

Union County and New Albany, its primary community, offer little in terms of opportunities for arts expression in the theatre arts. Seniors in the city high schools have the opportunity to produce a play, but that's about it. Linda Mitchell is determined to change that. Her goal is not only to bring quality theatre to New Albany's youth and adults, but also to enable the community to produce its own plays.

Funds from the **Artist Is In** program have supported performances in 1993 and 1994 by the Peanut Butter and Jelly Theatre company, African-American dancer and storyteller Deborah Ferguson, and the Corinth Theatre-Arts group, which did a storybook theatre program in local middle and elementary schools. "The teachers in the middle school were very skeptical," reported Mitchell. "They didn't think the students would sit still for any kind of theatre production." The students, however, were enthralled, and the teachers are clamoring for more performances.

A number of the students who saw these theatre programs are now a part of Mitchell's after-school and Saturday workshops. Mitchell used funds from the **Artist Is In** to support nine weeks of after-school classes in dance, art and theatre. In addition, an expressive arts workshop was held for four consecutive Saturdays, and about 50 youth were part of a mini-retreat featuring instruction in painting, theatre improvisation and dance. Mitchell's theatre camp, in June 1994, had more children signed up than available space would permit.

Mitchell's greatest challenge has been in locating professional artists in the area to teach workshops and classes and to staff the mini-retreat and the theatre camp. She turned to universities and arts organizations in the region, and has found willing partners in Cliff Thompson, director of the theatre at nearby Blue

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Mountain College; Murray Chase, director of the Corinth Theatre-Arts organization; and Anastasia McNeese, an artist from Tupelo.

The **Artist Is In** grant has also supported an Art in the Park Day, an arts day for children with special needs, a clowning program, and two productions by a fledgling community theatre group, one a dinner theatre program and one a children's theatre production. Murray Chase of Corinth Theatre-Arts has worked as a consultant with the theatre group. Mitchell has also located three people in the county with directing experience, and each has agreed to work with the community theatre on future projects. The local Kiwanis Club long ago had a theatre group called the Kudzu Players. When Mitchell spoke at the club to garner support for her program, she sparked their interest in reviving the group as part of the effort to develop a community theatre.

As a county extension agent, Mitchell works with Union County's 4-H program. "People think of 4-H as mainly a program for rural youth, with emphasis on things like livestock," she notes, "but it can be so much more. I don't do livestock; someone else in our office does. I work with all forms of creative expression and tie the arts into the regular 4-H enrichment programming." Word of Mitchell's arts programming has reached other 4-H leaders, and she has been asked to lead workshops in other counties and at the state 4-H Congress. Part of her focus has been on using older 4-H students who have been trained by artists in the after-school workshops and retreats to assist younger and special needs children with their own forms of creative expression.

Mitchell has received support from the Union County Board of Supervisors, the City of New Albany, and key administrators in both the city and county school systems. She realizes the importance of keeping her supporters aware of what is happening with her program. "I send letters or invitations to every supervisor, every alderman, every school official for each event and activity. I send pictures too," she states. The big question looming on the horizon is, "What happens next?" City and county government officials are ready to provide matching funds for continuing the arts programs, and Mitchell is seeking additional support. She is thinking of forming a local arts agency to coordinate all of the arts efforts. Meanwhile, she continues to provide arts experiences for students who need them and to make sure that these experiences will be available in years to come.

Appreciating Our Common Heritage

Quilting Residency with Organ Recital
Woodville Civic Club
Woodville

Local sixth-graders learn more about one of Woodville's oldest artistic traditions from community quilters such as Sallie Smith.

David Smith, Secretary-Treasurer of the Woodville Civic Club, couldn't understand some people's fascination with quilts and quilting. However, his perspective changed when he heard Elaine Carter, an 80-year-old quilter, speaking to a group of sixth-graders about her art form. "I was so touched when she described a quilt she had made from her father's neckties," Smith said. "The way she talked about her quilting was from the heart, and it was so moving—a very emotional experience."

Quilting was a central theme in the **Artist Is In** program developed by the Woodville Civic Club, an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving life in Wilkinson County. The quilting residency was a new venture for the club, which operates the Wilkinson County Museum, a small decorative arts museum with various exhibits featuring the history and art of Wilkinson County. The 1993-94 grant-supported program included an exhibit of quilts created by traditional artists of Wilkinson County, an artist residency program in local schools with quilters from the area, a photographic exhibit focusing on the cultural and historical highlights of Wilkinson County (including photographs of the ten documented quilters involved in the quilt exhibit and residency program), and a publication featuring interviews with the quilters as well as their photographs. The Civic Club also sponsored organ recitals by former Woodville resident John South Lewis in the historic St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the oldest Episcopal church building in Mississippi. A matinee performance for fourth and fifth graders from area public and private schools was provided free of charge. Proceeds from the evening recital helped to provide matching funds needed for the **Artist Is In** grant.

The overall program was developed by the Civic Club with the assistance of a folklorist recommended by the Mississippi Arts Commission. It was more comprehensive and extensive than other programs previously sponsored by the club, but, unfortunately, the working relationship between club officers and the folklorist was not entirely positive. "We're a strong-willed, self-determined group," Smith stated. "She [the folklorist] expected us to do what she said, and we don't operate that way."

Smith and his organization experienced several pitfalls in working with an artist/consultant that could have been avoided. Club leaders did not thoroughly interview the folklorist before she was hired. They actually let her develop most of the program and write the grant application. Timelines and dates for parts of the program weren't specified in advance, with the result that some activities were held too close together for adequate attention to be given to each. Administrative responsibilities and tasks such as hanging the exhibits and scheduling the school residencies weren't clearly assigned. The folklorist expected Civic Club volunteers to handle them, and they expected her to. Some of

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the program's goals for sharing and developing understanding between the community's black and white residents were not met as well as they might have been, when the folklorist assigned white quilters to residencies in mostly-white private schools and black quilters to work in mostly-black public schools.

Despite these problems, Smith deems the overall program a success. The quilt exhibit and artist residencies were well received by the schools and the community as a whole. The quilters themselves were enriched by their experiences. Mary Freeman and Dorothy McQuarter, two African-American quilters, noted that when the exhibit opened in the Wilkinson County Museum, it was the first time that they or any of their families had ever been to the museum. Talking to sixth-graders in the schools, the quilters were amazed at the response they received from the children. Even boys in the class begged the quilters to come back and teach them how to quilt! The photographic exhibit was strong as well; this exhibit will become part of the museum's archives and can be used again.

David Smith was most excited about the organ recital, the program component with the largest participation. Over 300 fourth and fifth-graders came to the matinee performance; around 80% of these were black children who had never before been welcomed into St. Paul's Episcopal Church. "Seeing the church filled with black children was reinforcing for the congregation and the children too," Smith said. He acknowledges that it was a step forward for race relations in the community. Lewis kept the attention of the students by playing familiar tunes (music from "Star Wars" and "The Addams Family") along with classical repertoire.

The Woodville Civic Club looks forward to working with the Mississippi Arts Commission on future projects but has no immediate plans for continuing the quilting program. "All in all we were pleased," Smith notes, "but it will take us awhile to get over [the magnitude] of the project."

Increasing Tourism with an Annual Arts Event

Tennessee Williams Festival
Foundation for Realizing Opportunities for Growth
Clarksdale

Playwright and author Elaine Dundy and other scholars recall their experiences with Tennessee Williams during the festival.

Panny Mayfield, Clarksdale journalist and volunteer coordinator for the Tennessee Williams Festival, is enthusiastic when describing the importance of the grant her organization received under the **Artist Is In** program to plan the first annual Tennessee Williams Festival in Clarksdale. "The **Artist Is In** grant was the key," she states emphatically. "We had been talking about the festival for years, but it [the grant] gave us the courage to do it!"

Clarksdale was the early childhood home of playwright Tennessee Williams. His grandfather, the Rev. Walter Dakin, was rector of St. George's Episcopal Church for 16 years. Williams attended first and fourth grades in Clarksdale; and as an adult, he kept close ties with Coahoma County, peppering his plays with references to actual people, places and events in the area.

Held in October 1993, the first Tennessee Williams festival in Clarksdale took almost two years to plan. "We didn't really have many problems," Mayfield explains, "except that we just ran out of time!" The majority of **Artist Is In** grant funds supported expenses related to three consultants who assisted the community in planning: Dr. Ann Abadie, Associate Director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, which sponsors the acclaimed Faulkner Conference; Dr. Kenneth Holditch of New Orleans, editor of the *Tennessee Williams Journal*, research professor of English for the University of New Orleans and a consultant for the Tennessee Williams festivals in New Orleans and Key West; and Gregory Boyd, professor of drama at Shelby State Community College in Memphis and guest director of numerous community theatre productions.

Planning and executing the festival required a tremendous volunteer effort from the entire community. Mayfield comments, "The festival was an amazing community-wide celebration. It's probably the only thing we've had here that included almost every community group." Key organizations involved in the festival included Coahoma Community College (which for the first time took a strong leadership role in a community project), the Clarksdale/Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce and Industrial Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee, the Carnegie Public Library and the Delta Blues Museum, the Clarksdale Community Theatre, the Sunflower River Blues Association, and the North Delta Planning and Development District.

The festival began on a Thursday evening and continued through Saturday night. The program, ambitious for a first-time event, included the following activities: an opening night premiere event on Moon Lake (a site mentioned in numerous Williams plays) with gourmet food, a dramatic presentation, and music by internationally-acclaimed Delta blues guitarist Big Jack Johnson; a scholar's panel discussion;

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walking tours of important Williams sites; a presentation by actress Ruby Dee at Coahoma Community College (with high school students from five counties in the audience); the finals of a Tri-State Student Dramatic Competition; a panel discussion entitled "I Remember Tom," with nostalgic recollections by local residents as well as visiting celebrities; performances of two one-act plays of the *Baby Doll* saga by the Sonoma State University of California Theatre Department; an original production of monologues from Tennessee Williams' male characters entitled *Reflections of His Soul*, created especially for the Clarksdale festival and presented by director Erma Duricko and her professional company from New York; an evening prayer service at St. George's Episcopal Church with a eulogy by Dr. Kenneth Holditch; and performances of *The Glass Menagerie* by the Clarksdale Community Theatre.

Plans for future festivals are underway and will continue to play a strong role in the development of the tourism industry in Coahoma County, one of the poorest counties in Mississippi. Approximately 425 participants registered for the 1993 festival, including visitors from all over the United States. Celebrities, biographers and friends of the playwright who attended the festival and served on its panels spoke enthusiastically about the festival's hospitality and community participation. Playwright and author Elaine Dundy from Los Angeles, who participated in the scholars panel, summed up the experience when she commented, "Kindness to strangers is the 11th commandment in the Deep South." Following the festival, Dundy wrote, "Thanks to the citizens of Clarksdale, the festival was an unqualified success." And thanks to the Mississippi Arts Commission and the **Artist Is In** program, Clarksdale, Coahoma County and the entire state of Mississippi have a new annual event in which they can take great pride and from which they will continue to reap economic benefits.

Improving the Economy with a Storytelling Fest

Blueberry Jubilee Storytelling Festival
Poplarville PTA
Poplarville

Building anticipation for the weekend festival, Rebecca Jernigan and other storytellers visit classrooms and libraries.

"We had such a good time! We're so excited; we know it's going to grow," exclaimed Hattie Gentry, founding member of the Storyteller's Guild in Poplarville and volunteer coordinator of the first annual Blueberry Jubilee Storytelling Festival, in speaking of the festival, held in June 1993. Gentry, who works with special education programs in the local school system, brought together resources from the Blueberry Council, sponsor of the town's annual Blueberry Jubilee festival; the Poplarville PTA, which has sponsored a number of storytellers as artists-in-residence for the school; the Pearl River Community College located in downtown Poplarville; and the Storyteller's Guild, a loosely-organized grassroots organization, to develop a storytelling festival in conjunction with the already-successful Blueberry Jubilee.

The Southeastern Association for the Perpetuation and Preservation of Storytelling (SAPPS) was an important resource in planning the festival. SAPPS provided a team of professional storytellers who not only advised Gentry on festival technicalities but also came to the festival, presented workshops and performed as featured tellers. SAPPS team member Chuck Larkin told Gentry, "Our team performs out of the love for the art, for fun, for expenses (if adequate funds are generated) and for honorariums if the festival is a smashing financial success. . . . Our experience has been that we usually are invited back to future storytelling festivals as Featured Performers."

Gentry researched a number of other storytelling festivals and modeled Poplarville's after one in Denton, TX. The Blueberry Jubilee, held annually the second Saturday in June, offered a tremendous opportunity for collaboration with an already successful event. The storytelling festival attracted not only amateur and professional storytellers, but also a number of teachers from Mississippi and surrounding states who took advantage of workshops on various topics, from integrating whole language into the curriculum through storytelling, to interviewing and collecting stories for presentation. In addition to the workshops, participants had opportunities to listen to professional storytellers in "olios" (storytelling lingo for potpourri performances) held each evening and to tell their own stories at the "swapping ground," a special place where anyone could tell or just listen. Storytellers also appeared in various local venues, from the bank to the library to the nursing home, for several days prior to the festival, generating community interest and excitement.

In a basic storytelling workshop, Georgia teller Sherry des Enfants tells a "bare bones" story that seems flat and dull. Then she tells it again, drawing the listener in with details of the setting and using her voice, hands and body to highlight characters and events. Led by des Enfants,

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participants practice her techniques for bringing a story to life, making it *their* story. They work in pairs and then share their stories with the group. "It was a very moving and powerful experience," commented one. Another summarized it this way, "I came to Poplarville a student and left a storyteller." Overall the comments on festival evaluation forms reflected the high quality of the workshops and their value to storytellers as well as classroom teachers.

Contributions of Pearl River Community College were central to the success of the festival. Poplarville has a bed & breakfast inn but no major hotels. The college provided a site for the festival workshops, as well as lodging and meals for participants at a very reasonable rate.

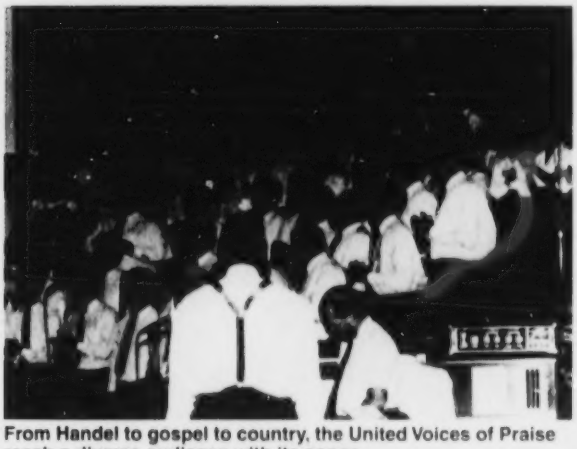
The storytelling festival added substantial economic benefits to the Blueberry Jubilee. Approximately 100 storytelling festival participants stayed at the college, and the local bed & breakfast was full the entire weekend. Genty estimates that at least 75 of the participants attended the Blueberry Jubilee on Saturday afternoon, spending an average of $25 per person. Local stores and restaurants all reported an increase in sales due to storytelling festival participants. As the festival grows, these economic benefits to the community will multiply.

Finally, the festival had a tremendous impact on the local Storyteller's Guild. The festival increased paid memberships in the guild by 50. Gentry noted that the guild had stopped its monthly meetings a couple of years ago, but it is resuming them due to the increased interest generated by the festival. The first meeting after the festival was scheduled for August 19 and was announced in the local paper. Amazingly, 24 people attended, with some from as far away as Picayune (25 mi.) and Lucedale (75 mi.). Hattie Gentry rejoices, "The guild has revived! People are still coming, and we have *wonderful* regional storytellers! Storytelling is sharing, and the main thing to do at these meetings is to let people tell their stories. That's why they'll keep coming back."

There are plans to formally organize the Storyteller's Guild and obtain nonprofit status so that it can better serve the growing festival. Thanks to the **Artist Is In** program, people will keep coming back to Poplarville for great stories.

Building Community Through Song

Northwest Delta Choral and Arts Council
City of Sardis



From Handel to gospel to country, the United Voices of Praise reach a diverse audience with its songs.

The auditorium of the old Sardis High School is not air-conditioned. Plaster is falling from the walls and ceiling, and fans are waving in the heat this April Sunday afternoon. The auditorium is packed with a racially-mixed audience of almost 300 people in folding chairs. As the musical program progresses from Mendelssohn's "He Is Watching Over Israel" and Handel's "Hallelujah, Amen" to "Ain't Got Time to Die," "Twelve Gates to the City" and other gospel favorites, the audience loosens up, clapping and swaying to the music. The concert culminates with a country favorite, "Love Can Build a Bridge," and the audience applauds the singers with a standing ovation. The United Voices of Praise—A Bridge of Love, a chorus of over 70 voices, black and white, from six counties in the northwest Delta area of Mississippi, has just concluded its spring concert, its first concert in its new home.

The City of Sardis, owner of the old high school building, has leased space in the building to the newly-formed Northwest Delta Choral and Arts Council for $1 per year. In return, the Arts Council will sponsor at least one choral concert per year in the building, with proceeds going toward its renovation. The Arts Council will thus assist the City in renovating the building and will develop it as a regional arts center, housing not only the United Voices of Praise chorus, but also classes in visual arts, music, theatre and dance, and performances by local and regional groups.

The United Voices of Praise and its umbrella organization, the Northwest Delta Choral and Arts Council, are a dream come true for Jon Blouin. For some time Blouin, a professional church music director and choral conductor, had seen the need in the northwest Delta area for a regional chorus that would join people of all ages and races together in song. In 1992-93, as a part of the Panola Mission Program, Jon began to make his dream a reality.

The Panola Mission Program is a leadership development program in Panola County organized by Rev. Jim Dollar, minister of the Batesville Presbyterian Church, that trains individuals for leadership and community service. Now in its third year, the program is a nine-month program involving 18 participants each year. Participants work in teams of six to identify and complete a project that will benefit the community. In 1992-93 Jon Blouin shared his vision for a regional chorus, and his team from the Panola Mission Program helped to make it happen. One year later, the chorus, United Voices of Praise—A Bridge of Love, is winding down its first season of performances. (In the week following the performance at the old Sardis High School, the chorus performed two additional concerts at other locations in the six-county region it serves.) Not only is Blouin the conductor of the group, he is also the part-

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time executive director of the Northwest Delta Choral and Arts Council. The **Artist Is In** program has been instrumental in fostering the development of the chorus and the arts council, providing a solid base for the development of a variety of arts activities in the region and a bridge for the black and white communities in the region to come together.

Jon Blouin has worked hard to develop the partnerships that have made his dream a reality. In a few months he was able to gather support from city governments in Sardis and Batesville, the major cities in Panola County, the county Board of Supervisors, the Industrial Development Authority, the South Panola Chamber of Commerce and the Batesville Rotary Club. The Rotary Club selected the Arts Council as one of its projects for the year and contributed $2,000 to buy music for the choir.

Blouin also recruited choir members and community support from the six-county area, knocking on doors and visiting with representatives from arts organizations, churches of all races and denominations, schools and colleges. His persistence and legwork have paid off in the development of the choir and the leadership of the Arts Council. Both have a solid racial mix and representation from across the Delta area, making the organization a true regional venture.

The Arts Council has been on a fast track, incorporating and acquiring tax-exempt status, setting up committees, developing projects in the visual as well as the performing arts, and raising funds. The organization is building on solid financial footing, taking one step at a time. Still, Blouin is amazed that in such a short period of time the Arts Council board took the risk and made the commitment to pay professional staff. "Not every brand new organization can take a leap of faith and do that," he reasons. (Blouin receives part-time pay for conducting the chorus and serving as executive director of the Arts Council. Accompanists and choral assistants for the choir receive pay as well.)

Over 150 singers auditioned for United Voices of Praise. Chorus members have varying degrees of musical training, from master's degrees in music to no formal training at all. "Before our retreat, some choir members had never held a piece of printed music before," notes Blouin. Training in sight reading music is provided for those choir members who lack that skill, with classes held prior to each of the choir rehearsals. Blouin recalls with emotion the choir retreat, held in August 1993 at Sardis Lake, a nearby resort. It was the first time members of the choir had met, and the first time many of them had the experience of working closely with people of another race. Blouin sums it up in these words, "Here was at least one place where the community could come together—and *sing*!" Thanks to support from the **Artist Is In** program, the United Voices of Praise will continue to sound in Panola County and throughout the northwest Delta region.

Generating Civic Pride with a Community Festival

Mayfest '94
Downtown Project
Senatobia

Creative activities for children, a resident sculptor, performances, and exhibiting craftsmen bring the arts to life in Sentatobia.

Despite a threat of rain in the morning, the day became a perfect one for an outdoor community festival in the North Mississippi community of Senatobia. Families flocked to the high school grounds, where the smell of grilled hamburgers and barbecue filled the air. Native Americans from the Choctaw Indian community in Philadelphia performed tribal dances in beautiful native dress. Local bands and singers from the community college performed on one stage, while gospel singers performed under a tent in another location. Cottage craftspeople displayed and sold all types of crafts, from handmade quilts, to woodwork, to plants and flower arrangements and baby items. In the children's area, participants were encouraged to decorate visors, silk screen a festival t-shirt, make sock puppets, or string a bead necklace. In a shady spot sculptor Tony Eccles wielded a hot glue gun, assisting children assembling their own sculptures from a box of unusual items, otherwise considered junk. (Community residents were supposed to bring their own junk or "relics," and Eccles agreed to create a sculpture for permanent display in the city's public library.) Mayfest '94, Senatobia's first annual community festival was underway. Support from the **Artist Is In** helped to make this festival a celebration of the arts as well, with performances in music and dance, a juried art show, and work by Eccles.

Festival organizer Pete Thomas, director of the Downtown Project, Senatobia's Main Street organization, was honest about problems encountered in planning the city's first arts festival. "Our biggest problem. . .was that we bit off more than we could chew on the juried art exhibition. Our advisor for that part of the program was overly optimistic, and we offered too many categories for a first-year competition. We had too few entries for the number of categories." As a result, the art exhibition was a festival weakness, lacking in quality entries. Nevertheless Thomas expects the festival to learn from its mistakes and to do it better the next time around.

There was nothing wrong with the organization of the festival, however. In July 1993, the Tate County Chamber of Commerce formed an executive committee to solicit support for a festival. In August, a diverse group of community leaders and artists met with consultant Virginia Brown to create a vision for an arts festival. Plans were made, and working committees were formed to plan and program each festival area. The festival dates were set for May 13 and 14, 1994. The grant application for support from the **Artist Is In** program submitted on September 1 included a detailed time line for planning and executing every aspect of the festival. Thomas notes that the planning committee followed its time line well, meeting the interim deadlines. Indeed, the smooth organization of the festival was evident; events

took place as planned, and community volunteers were clearly visible in all festival locations.

In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, the Senatobia Main Street organization was also creative in acquiring additional support for the festival. In-kind donations were provided by the City and the power company. A street dance on Friday evening to kick off the festival provided a fine opportunity to generate corporate support. Sponsors bought tables for the dance at a price of $75 for a table of eight. "We didn't go lay on the doorstep of the two banks and the two largest employers in town," Thomas explained. "This way we were able to spread out the corporate donations, and people got something for their money." More than 35 sponsor tables were sold for the dance, generating over $2600.

Thomas stated that the various civic and community organizations involved in the festival worked together well. "All partners saw it as something good for the city, something that would foster civic pride and enthusiasm," he added. The **Artist Is In** grant funds enhanced the artistic offerings, paying the artists and providing the stages and technical equipment needed for their performances. "The entertainers were thrilled that they would have a stage with all equipment provided," said Thomas. "Many of them were then willing to do more for us for a smaller fee."

An evaluation meeting was held following the festival before community leaders started work on next year's festival. In yet another community the **Artist Is In** grant has acted as a catalyst to spur ongoing arts activity.

Revitalizing Neighborhoods Through the Arts

Plan for a Farish Street Arts District
ArtsAlliance of Jackson and Hinds County
Jackson

A Saturday morning workshop wets the appetites of Farish Street children for future arts activities in the district.

Back in the 1950's, Farish Street was thriving as the main business district and home for Jackson's black community. It offered black residents—not welcomed in other areas of town when segregation was at its peak—everything from banking to funeral services, from food to entertainment. Now defined by vacant property, crime and drugs, the neighborhood has been the target of at least five different planning studies in the past decade. With assistance from the **Artist Is In** program, the ArtsAlliance of Jackson and Hinds County is working with the City of Jackson to develop the historic Farish Street area as a cultural arts district.

Project director Anna Walker has had some difficulty in securing participation in the project from Farish Street residents. "There have been several studies and plans for the improvement of Farish Street in the past," she notes. "Residents have had their expectations raised many times. They are jaded because nothing has come of all the studies." Walker and her planning committee are trying to prove that this time it will be different; this time there will be actions that support the plan. To that end, Walker has been working with individuals and organizations already active in the community to produce several collaborative cultural events, serving as models for the type of ongoing activity the ArtsAlliance hopes will develop in the district.

"My biggest surprise," exclaims Walker, "is that the program is forming a life of its own, one that is really responsive to the needs of the community. I wasn't really prepared for that. But the organizations [in the Farish Street community] that I'm working with know the needs of the community, and they had a number of ideas that the ArtsAlliance could support." Initial collaborative projects in the area include the following: (1) In collaboration with the Smith-Robertson Museum, a lecture was presented by Jeannette Carson from Maryland, an expert on collecting black memorabilia. More than 50 people attended the lecture at the museum, which is located in an old art deco school building in the Farish Street district. (2) Dr. Emma Baham, a music teacher at nearby Jackson State University, brought in Dr. Dusame Maraire, an artist-storyteller from Zimbabwe. The ArtsAlliance invited youth from the Jackson Youth Service Corps, also headquartered in the Farish Street neighborhood, to hear Dr. Maraire. Audience participation was key in this event, as teenagers played African drums and responded with enthusiasm to the richness of their cultural heritage. (3) An arts and crafts workshop for youth was held in December at the Smith-Robertson Museum. Although the workshop had been publicized in the area, the attendance was sparse that morning. So project directors Johnnie Gilbert and Albert Brown hit the streets and literally "brought them in." Participants made ornaments and then decorated the tree at

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the nearby Youth Service Corps. (4) Actor and storyteller Reginald Hunter presented an after-school program at the Bethlehem Center, a neighborhood child-care center. Hunter presented a strong role model for these low-income, at-risk children, and they hung on his every word.

"Response to all of these events, from the children *and* the teenagers, has been so *lively*," states Walker. "I think it's important to have 'hands on' experiences to reach some people. The artist from Zimbabwe and the arts and crafts workshop were especially successful in that respect," she adds.

Walker experienced some delays in organizing the planning committee that will actually produce the three-to-five-year plan for the Farish Street Arts District. The planning process is headed by consultant Johnnie Gilbert of Tougaloo College. Gilbert has been busy researching previous City and private plans for development and improvement of Farish Street. The community planning committee has representation from the Jackson City Council, the Hinds County Board of Supervisors, the city's Department of Human and Cultural Services, and the city's Office of Planning and Development (which has been involved in other projects related to the area). In addition, there are artists, educators, representatives from the Farish Street Historic District Foundation and the Farish Street business community, and representatives from arts and social service organizations in the neighborhood. A strong committee representing city leadership and all of the neighborhood's diverse interests is critical to the development of an effective plan.

In tandem with the plan, Walker hopes to coordinate one or two more arts events in the neighborhood before completion of the plan. An exciting and workable plan for the cultural district should be complete by the fall.

With continued assistance from concerned neighborhood organizations, the ArtsAlliance, and programs such as the **Artist Is In**, Farish Street will take on a new look and a new spirit in the months and years to come.

More Success Stories

Discover more ideas from 16
other Mississippi projects.

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A. Programs Targeting Children and Youth

Half of the project grants awarded through the Artist Is In program were for programs to provide arts experiences for children and youth. As budgets for public education continue to shrink, communities can no longer expect that children will receive training and opportunities for participation in the arts through their schools. Collaborative programs designed to reach children and youth continue to be an important need in many communities. The following programs received funding to address this need.

Arts Workshops for Youth: Boys and Girls Club of Clay County, West Point

The Boys and Girls Club in West Point reaches at-risk youth ages 6 through 18. Club membership consists of about 75% African-American youth and 25% white youth. During 1992 and 1993 the club held five arts workshops, with professional artists instructing both youth and adults in pottery, basket weaving, photography, drawing, watercolor, and blues and gospel music. Workshops were held on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., with a modest lunch provided. Club director Robert Woodard reports that more than 135 people attended the workshops, and arts activities have continued as a part of the club's regular offerings, with students performing and exhibiting their work on a regular basis. Partners in the project were the local government and Board of Education, schools, and the local and regional artists who conducted the workshops.

Summer Neighborhood Arts Festival: City of Vicksburg Recreation Department

The City of Vicksburg developed a summer program for inner city children ages 5-12 that brought the arts to five neighborhoods with concentrations of low/moderate income minority families. In the summer of 1992, artists providing instruction in visual arts, photography, music and dance conducted intensive 1- to 2-week workshops at each of the five sites. Project director Marcia Weaver noted that most of the children involved would have been unable to participate had the program not been located in their neighborhood, because they had no means of transportation. The children shone in two public performances and a Summer Neighborhood Arts Show at the Vicksburg High School that featured their work. As not all grant funds were spent, the program was extended to the summer of 1993, with three mini-workshops held at the public library and two neighborhood sites. These workshops featured drawing, watercolor and quilting. More than 300 children participated in these "hands on" arts experiences! More support came from the International Paper Company, the Vicksburg Housing Authority, the Vicksburg Art Association, and the Vicksburg Arts Council. The Vicksburg Recreation Department was convinced; now the arts are included in all summer programming. During the summer of 1994, arts instruction was taught along with supervised recreation and sports at five neighborhood parks throughout the city.

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After-School Arts Program: Columbus Arts Council

In partnership with the Columbus/Lowndes Recreation Authority and the Columbus Public Schools, the Columbus Arts Council developed an after-school arts program providing arts instruction in visual arts, music, dance and theatre. Originally planned for a park setting, the program took place at selected school sites because of safety and the transportation costs involved. Parents paid from $1 to $5 per day for the program, depending on their financial ability. Arts Council director Trudy Gildea reports that during 1992-93, more than 50 children participated three days per week at two school sites. Both schools begged for the program to continue in 1993-94, and the Arts Council and the Recreation Authority have continued support for arts activities two afternoons per week at each school. Newspaper coverage has been favorable, and now more schools are clamoring to become part of the program.

The Fibers of Life Textile Arts Program: Oktibbeha County Schools, Starkville

The Oktibbeha County Schools and the Oktibbeha 4-H Program developed the Fibers of Life Textile Arts Program to provide instruction in textile arts such as weaving, quilting and tatting to students in pre-school and elementary grades. In 1993 and 1994 Fibers of Life has funded a monthly program in the local extension center and in four county schools that have after-school care programs. In addition, 400 children attended a summer arts day camp, held for 2 days in 1993 and 1994. Fibers of Life has also sponsored artist demonstrations at area festivals and craft fairs, including the Black Hills Festival (emphasizing African-American art forms), Pioneer Day (featuring demonstrations of art forms from the viewpoint of their contributions to our cultural heritage), and the Very Special Arts Festival (a regional festival for disabled youth).

Arts Activities for Youth: Martin Luther King, Jr. Association, Pickens

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Association is located in the community of Pickens, which has a population of 1200. It was formed in 1991 to improve recreational, social, and cultural opportunities for residents of Pickens and Holmes County. The association has purchased a once-segregated local park, including a clubhouse, tennis court, baseball field and pool, and is renovating the facilities for a variety of activities, including an arts program. **Artist Is In** funds are being used to sponsor a professional artist in residence at the center to conduct after-school and summer arts programs for area youth.

Arts Enrichment Program: City of Itta Bena Recreation Department

Working with Mississippi Valley State University, the City of Itta Bena developed a program targeting 150 disadvantaged and at-risk students in the area in grades K-12. The highlight of the project was a summer program in 1993 featuring arts classes in painting, photography, music and drama at four different locations. A special exhibit at the end of the summer showcased the work of students. Local and regional artists who worked with the program were so convinced of its value that several have continued to volunteer their services to work with students during the school year. An exhibit of student work was held in April 1994, and the city's May Festival also featured student artwork and performances. Itta Bena is now on the move! The city has acquired a building for use as an arts facility and is forming a local arts council as a part of city government.

Creative Arts Program: 4-H Youth Development Program, Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service

The statewide 4-H Youth Development Program is a part of the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, headquartered at Mississippi State University in Starkville. Director Jim Yonge recognizes the potential for linking the arts with 4-H in order to reach rural audiences. A graduate student intern in the statewide office is working to revise and expand the curriculum of 4-H's Expressive Arts program, which provides materials and training to 4-H students in music, art, drama, dance, photography and public speaking. More than 10,000 youth statewide are currently enrolled in Expressive Arts programs through 4-H. The revised curriculum includes not only activities that focus on "art for art's sake," but also suggestions for developing arts activities that link with other 4-H programs, such as forestry. County extension agents will use curriculum materials to train local volunteer 4-H leaders. In addition, an expressive arts workshop will be offered as part of the statewide 4-H Congress in June 1994. Teens ages 14-18 will work on developing their own programs in music, visual art, theatre and dance, then share their skills in their local clubs.

Theatre Production for Disadvantaged Youth: St. James AME Church/Metamorphosis, Meridian

Metamorphosis is a new organization in Meridian, formed under the umbrella of the St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. The group has focused its energies on the need for underprivileged African-American youth from broken homes to have the opportunity not only for exposure to the arts but also to develop the pride and self esteem that comes with participation in the performing arts. Metamorphosis hired a director to work with students from the Boys and Girls Club of Lauderdale County. Together they produced an original play, *What the Alien Saw*, which ran for three performances at the Grand Opera House in Meridian in May 1993. In-kind donations from local businesses and organizations such as the Salvation Army, Color-Tyme, Holiday Inn, Domino's Pizza and Subway helped to make the theatre experience for the children complete with costumes, props and a cast party afterward.

Arts Program for Youth: Parents for Public Schools and the Grenada County Extension Service

Parents for Public Schools and the Grenada County Extension Service, in partnership with the City of Grenada, the Grenada County Board of Supervisors, the Grenada School District and the Berta B. Calhoun Fine Arts Council are using funds from the **Artist Is In** grant program to develop a continuing arts program for the youth of Grenada County. The grant-supported activities began in December 1993 with a celebration for children with disabilities entitled "Christmas for the Birds." The 23 participating children made edible "ornaments" and then took them to a downtown gazebo to exhibit and to feed the birds. Extension agent Marianne Clark has also developed a quilting residency project in two local elementary schools. Area quilters are working with students in each school in the spring of 1994 to complete a quilt. The two finished quilts will be displayed permanently in a new elementary school now under construction. Music and theatre artists have been featured in performances and residencies in local schools. Two summer camp experiences are planned for 1994: arts activities as part of an entomology camp, and a special Youth At Risk camp emphasizing Native-American crafts. Artists from several states will work with campers in the areas of music, drama, and pottery. Additional funds and manpower are needed to continue the arts program in Grenada next year, but community leaders are committed to its support.

Arts Introduction Program: Union County Cooperative Extension Service, New Albany

See previous section.

Quilting Residency with Organ Recital: Woodville Civic Club

See previous section.

Summer Arts Program For Disadvantaged Youth: Hattiesburg Arts Council

See previous section.

Mud Daubers Project: George E. Ohr Arts and Cultural Center, Biloxi

See previous section.

B. Community Projects and Festivals

Almost one-third of the grants under the Artist Is In program were for projects meeting special community needs, including several festivals. These projects and festivals are as varied as the communities they serve. Yet in each community, the grant funds have either served as a catalyst for an ongoing program or left the community with a permanent reminder of the importance of the arts to community spirit.

Ragsdale Avenue Park: City of Hazlehurst

The City of Hazlehurst is developing an Art Park on a green space of land next to the railroad tracks in downtown Hazlehurst. The completed park will include an amphitheater with architecture reminiscent of the city's old freight depot and two groves of trees, one containing six permanently erected steel easels (protected by acrylic covers) for local artists' exhibits and the other a sculpture garden. Although the amphitheater has not yet been erected, the park committee has planted the groves of trees, installed the easels and a number of benches, and erected a mural painted by high school art classes from three public and two private schools in the area. The first exhibit on the easels opened in May 1994, and several future exhibits have been planned, all featuring local artists. High school classes are painting a new mural, and local high school bands have several performances scheduled in the park. Plans for fall include using the park for storytelling and Saturday "Art in the Park" days. The committee developing the park and programming works through the Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Copiah County Schools, the Hazlehurst City Library, and Royal Maid (whose local manufacturing plant employs more than 130 legally blind people). Coordinator John Huntington hopes that Hazlehurst will form a local arts agency in the future.

Carrollton Pilgrimage: Greenwood Leflore/Carroll Economic Development Foundation, Greenwood

The Carrollton Pilgrimage is a festival held each April showcasing historic homes in a three-county area in the Mississippi Delta. The Pilgrimage festival was enlarged and improved with arts activities in 1992 and 1993 with support from the **Artist Is In** program. Part of the Pilgrimage involves train rides linking the Carrollton community with communities in two other counties: Greenwood and Winona. Artists from nearby Mississippi Valley State University painted a mural on the front of the old Depot Building in Carrollton, departure point for the train rides. In 1993 the mural was repaired and sealed with plexiglass, becoming a lasting reminder of the bustling depot of earlier years. Local jazz and blues artists were hired both years to perform for passengers in the lounge car of the train. High school choirs and local bands performed at various depot stops along the way. An art show by local artists and an art contest for fifth grade students further enhanced the appeal of the festival. A number of these activities will continue as part of the festival each year.

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Community Festivals in Rosedale/Gunnison and Hollandale/Arcola: Mississippi Institute for Small Towns

The arts can be a powerful tool for community development, as evidenced by this project directed by the Mississippi Institute for Small Towns (MIST) in conjunction with the Master of Public Policy and Administration program of Jackson State University and supported by a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In this program, MIST paired each of two Mississippi Delta communities with another community in the hopes that the partner communities would form community development organizations. Rosedale was paired with Gunnison, forming the Great River Community Development Corporation, and Hollandale was paired with Arcola, forming the Southeast Washington County Community Development Corporation. Funds through the **Artist Is In** program supported two festivals in the fall of 1992, representing the first cooperative efforts between the partner cities. Each of the festivals was planned by local community members and included performances by local artists as well as vendors of food and crafts. New artistic and cultural resources were discovered in each of the communities, and these resources continue to be tapped by the development corporations in other programs they implement.

Tishomingo County Arts Council: Tishomingo County Development Foundation, Iuka

A developing local arts agency often needs professional assistance, and the Tishomingo County Arts Council, in its formative stages, used funds from **The Artist Is In** program to hire national consultant Danielle Withrow in 1992 to assist in planning its initial programs. Grant funds also supported a number of these programs in 1992-93. The Arts Council created a four-program concert series, with performances held in a new 450-seat auditorium at Iuka's Educational Complex. During the first season, 80% of the auditorium seats were sold. In addition, Withrow urged the group to develop strong arts-in-education programs. These included various artist residencies, workshops and performances that reached nearly every student, K-12, in Tishomingo County. The Arts Council continues to grow and is seeking funding from the City of Iuka as well as the Tishomingo County Board of Supervisors. Arts-in-education programs are supported by interest from a trust fund, part of a grant made by Newman's Own Salad Dressing Company to the Tishomingo County Magnet High School.

Blueberry Jubilee Storytelling Festival: Poplarville PTA

See previous section.

Northwest Delta Choral and Arts Council: City of Sardis

See previous section.

Mayfest '94: Downtown Project, Senatobia

See previous section.

Tennessee Williams Festival: Foundation for Realizing Opportunities for Growth, Clarksdale

See previous section.

C. Planning Projects

Successful arts programs need thorough and careful planning. Four of the Artist Is In grants supported planning initiatives that will bear fruit in years to come as the programs are fully realized.

Plan for Outdoor Drama: Greenville Arts Council

Through funding from the **Artist Is In** program, the Greenville Arts Council, in partnership with the Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, hired the Institute of Outdoor Drama at the University of North Carolina to conduct a feasibility study evaluating the possibility of a historical outdoor drama in Washington County. After reviewing over 100 pages of information supplied by the Arts Council, the Institute sent a study team of three to Greenville in August 1992, to interview community leaders and residents and to review potential sites. The final report, presented in August 1993, determined that an outdoor drama in Washington County would be a viable contribution to tourism development in the Delta. Winterville Mounds State Park, featuring the history and culture of the Temple Mounds Indians, was identified as the most likely site for the drama, and a story line featuring the importance of the Indians and the Mississippi River in the development of the Delta area was suggested. The study also presented rough budgets for constructing the amphitheater and starting the drama. Arts Council director Louise Loughran notes that although the project has great potential for the area, three obstacles must be overcome before an outdoor drama in Greenville can become a reality:

(1) The Institute recommends that all such dramas play in the summer because of the high tourist volume and the availability of college students to staff the productions. However, the heat and humidity of the Mississippi Delta are truly oppressive in summer—even at 8:30 in the evening.

(2) The ideal starting time for summer outdoor dramas is at nightfall, around 8:30 p.m. This is precisely the time when mosquitos become active, and there are many, many mosquitos in the park that is the recommended site. A mosquito control company says it can take care of the problem, but Loughran and others are skeptical.

(3) Finally, the Institute identified the need for a strong leader to push the project forward, one who can stay with the project for perhaps a six-year period while the drama gets on its feet. No clear leader in the Greenville area has emerged. The Greenville Arts Council is busy renovating an old school building it has acquired, and development of the outdoor drama is not a priority.

Corinth-Shiloh Outdoor Drama Project: Corinth Theatre-Arts

In 1993, funds from the **Artist Is In** program were used to support another feasibility study for the development of an outdoor drama in Corinth. This city has a strong Civil War heritage and is located just 22 miles from Shiloh, Tennessee, site of one of the war's bloodiest battles. The study was undertaken by Corinth Theatre-Arts (CT-A), a strong theatre organization in the region, and prepared by the Institute of Outdoor Drama from the University of North Carolina. CT-A will develop the drama and has brought together local and regional resources that can ensure its success. The local tourism council helped to support the feasibility study, and a host of other civic and community organizations in the region participated. The study identified a site for construction of the

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amphitheater and suggested a Civil War story line for the drama linking Corinth with the Battle of Shiloh. Despite problems in getting the consultants' report on a timely basis, CT-A director Murray Chase hopes to open the drama in the summer of 1996. The organization is busy trying to acquire the ideal site from its owner, the Packaging Corporation of America. It is also seeking funding from a variety of sources, including the Northwest Mississippi Planning and Development Corporation and the state legislature. CT-A is pursuing support on a regional basis as well. Chase has met with officials from the Tennessee Valley Authority, as the tourism generated by the drama will have a positive impact throughout the valley.

Oakes African-American Cultural Center: Yazoo County Fair and Civic League

The Yazoo County Fair and Civic League has worked to improve living conditions in the black community and to provide opportunities for enrichment for many years. It has joined with a local tourism organization, Discover Yazoo, to renovate the Oakes mansion, a historic African-American home in Yazoo City, and convert it into an African-American Cultural Center and a museum for local artifacts. A host of other community organizations and churches are supporting the effort as well. The planning grant from the **Artist Is In** program funded consulting services from the Architecture Department at Mississippi State University. University consultants were able to get the property listed in the Mississippi State and National Archives of History. They provided detailed plans for restoration of the house and renovation of its interior. Grant funds also supported the development of promotional materials for the project, including a brochure, a picture of the proposed museum, and a portable display telling the story of the Oakes mansion. With assistance from the **Artist Is In** program, renovation of the mansion is well underway, and Yazoo County is closer to the realization of its dream for an African-American Cultural Center.

Plan for a Farish Street Arts District: ArtsAlliance of Jackson and Hinds County, Jackson

See previous section.

Tips

Plan for success with advice from
Artist Is In! organizers.

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Tips for Planning Your Community Arts Program

1. *Form a planning committee.*
Form a planning committee with representatives from not only the arts but also local government, social service organizations, community clubs and volunteer groups, schools and community colleges, and the target group for your program.

2. *Involve parents in the planning process.*
If your program is for children and youth, involve parents in the planning process. (In Itta Bena, John Flowers discovered that parents didn't want their young children doing woodcarving with sharp objects, so he changed the program to include photography workshops instead.)

3. *Don't hesitate to ask for assistance.*
Don't hesitate to ask for assistance from the staff of your state arts commission. Keep them informed of your progress as well.

4. *Include workshops or "hands on" arts experiences.*
Whenever possible, include workshops or "hands on" arts experiences by professional artists as part of your program. Through participation, people can develop a greater understanding of the art form and appreciation for the creative process.

5. *Bring the program to the participants.*
When planning arts programs for children or for a target audience that is disadvantaged, try to bring the program to the participants in their neighborhood. Transportation is often a problem. (In Vicksburg, Marcia Weaver would not have been able to reach at-risk children in her summer program without taking the program to their neighborhoods.)

6. *Look for unlikely collaborations.*
Be on the lookout for unusual opportunities for collaboration. (The Hattiesburg Arts Council sponsored a workshop in dance and movement in collaboration with a sports camp at a local university.)

7. *Plan thoroughly and in detail!*
Create a timeline for your program, including who is responsible for each step. Advance planning is especially critical for festivals and other multi-faceted events.

8. *Consider the administrative needs.*
Carefully consider the administrative needs of the program, and develop a plan for adequate staffing, whether paid or volunteer. **Make sure the necessary administrative and volunteer support is in place** before beginning the program.

9. *Adjust your plan to meet needs.*
Be flexible! If a program is new, you may face unanticipated problems or opportunities. Don't hesitate to adjust your plan to meet needs, solve problems or take advantage of new opportunities. (The George Ohr Arts and Cultural Center in Biloxi employed six potters and sculptors with a stipend that had been earmarked for one potter, enriching the program by the use of many different artists.)

10. *Use professional artists.*
For a quality program, use professional artists and pay them professional wages. Seek out artists in your region through schools, colleges, churches, arts organizations, galleries and juried art competitions.

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Tips for Promoting Involvement and Developing Community Support

1. ***Promote creative partnerships.***
As an "arts person," get involved in other community organizations, on boards and committees. Look for opportunities to collaborate and promote creative partnerships with the arts. (Patty Hall's involvement on the Hattiesburg Recreation Board brought the opportunity for collaboration with a sports camp.)

2. ***"Piggyback" your arts program.***
Look for opportunities to "piggyback" your arts program with an existing community event or activity. (For example, the storytelling festival in Poplarville was planned in conjunction with the town's annual Blueberry Jubilee.)

3. ***Form a community-based committee.***
Form a community-based committee to plan the program before applying for grant funds. Include representatives from arts organizations, community and social service organizations, volunteer groups, and especially from the group your want to participate in the project. People support what they help to create, and teamwork is important to a successful program.

4. ***Listen carefully.***
When working with a planning committee representing a number of community groups, listen carefully to the ideas presented. **Be flexible** about how the various groups can contribute to the project.

5. ***Be responsive to community needs.***
If a project is truly responsive to the needs of a community, it may deviate from the plan and begin to have a life of its own. Be sensitive to how a program is meeting needs, and be flexible enough to implement changes that meet specific needs. (Anna Walker of the ArtsAlliance of Jackson and Hinds County didn't anticipate many of the collaborations her program has had with cultural and social service organizations in the Farish Street area. However, when these organizations suggested projects that met the needs of residents as well as the goals of the ArtsAlliance, Walker eagerly supported them with grant funds.)

6. ***Personally visit key players.***
Knock on doors! Personally visit school officials, churches, government officials, community leaders, and anyone whose support you want. (Jon Blouin credits some of his success in forming the United Voices of Praise chorus and the Northwest Delta Choral and Arts Council to the time he spent knocking on doors and asking for support for the program.)

7. ***Develop a speaker's forum.***
Prepare a presentation on your program and take it to Rotary, Kiwanis, women's clubs, church groups, senior citizen's groups, PTA's, etc. Use every vehicle you can to **educate** the community about your program. (Murray Chase of Corinth Theatre-Arts has successfully used a speaker's forum to educate his community and region about the benefits of an outdoor drama.)

Tips for Working with Local Government

1. ***Get to know your elected officials.***
Get to know your elected officials. They work for you! Make appointments to meet them **personally** and discuss your program and its benefits to the community.

2. ***Keep elected officials aware.***
If local government has supported your program (and even if it hasn't), keep elected officials aware of what you are doing. Invite them to performances, workshops or special events. Send photos, press clippings, or your newsletter on a regular basis. Let them hear from you **often.**

3. ***Get to know city staff.***
Work with local government from the inside. Get to know city staff who are involved in planning, community development, and recreation. Show them how the arts can enhance their plans and programs. (For example, Marcia Weaver worked with the Recreation Department in Vicksburg to develop summer programs in the arts; now arts activities are included in all of the city's summer recreation programs.).

4. ***Introduce government officials to artists.***
When you bring in outside artists for a special program, provide opportunities for them to meet local government officials. Host a modest reception, or invite officials to a workshop or performance. (The Hattiesburg Arts Council took performing artist Deborah Ferguson to a City Council meeting!)

5. ***Make your budget request reasonable.***
Be knowledgeable and reasonable when seeking financial support. Get to know your city's budget and where there are funds that may be used to support your program. Keep your request for funds at a reasonable level, given funds available and the average appropriation made to similar organizations or programs.

6. ***Ask for in-kind support.***
Many city governments or public agencies unable to fund a program directly can contribute in-kind support. Don't hesitate to ask for space or supplies for your organization or project. (The City of Sardis has leased an old school building to the Northwest Delta Choral and Arts Council for $1 per year. The City is contributing the plumbing and electrical work needed to bring the building up to code; the Arts Council will be responsible for air conditioning and cosmetic renovation.)

7. ***Always acknowledge local government support.***
When you do receive support (financial or otherwise) from government entities, always publicly acknowledge and thank the responsible officials. Give credit to them in any printed materials you distribute.

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Tips for Selecting and Working With Artists and Consultants

1. ***Ask for recommendations.***
Ask the staff of your state arts council for recommendations of artists and/or consultants for your program. Also look for artists through local schools and colleges, arts organizations, churches, galleries, and juried exhibitions.

2. ***Check the references.***
Carefully check the references of any artist or consultant you are considering. Contact other organizations they have worked for. Find out if there were any problems. Artists and consultants will be representing your organization to the public, and issues of reputation and character should be considered along with skills and experience.

3. ***Maintain control of the project.***
Avoid allowing a consultant to plan the project and write all funding proposals. Even if yours is a small, volunteer-based organization, maintain control of the project, from the planning stage onward. The consultant works for you.

4. ***Interview artists carefully.***
Interview artists carefully before you contract with them. Find out what kinds of groups they are comfortable working with (large or small, older or younger children, children and adults with special needs, etc.) and what settings they work best in (school classroom, museum, festival craft area, studio). Ask what they hope to gain from the experience of working with your program. Then consider the communication styles and skills of various artists and match them to the needs of your target group.

5. ***Employ local or regional artists.***
Whenever possible, employ local or regional artists. Artists who have a vested interest in the community will often go the extra mile to ensure a program's success. (In Biloxi and Itta Bena, some local artists who were paid as part of the project also volunteered additional time after its completion.)

6. ***Have clear, written agreements.***
Have clear, written agreements with all artists and consultants. Be very specific about the job description, to whom the person reports and how often, all tasks to be accomplished, workshop/performance dates, deadlines, procedures for requesting or purchasing supplies, and payment amounts and schedules. Require that any modifications to the agreement be put in writing and approved by both the organization and the contracting artist or consultant. (Disputes between the Woodville Civic Club and the folklorist they hired could have been avoided with clear, written agreements.)

7. ***Take appropriate action.***
If terms of the written agreement are violated, move quickly to take appropriate action (through legal channels, if necessary) that will lead to compliance. (Corinth Theatre-Arts had to threaten legal action in order to get a final report from consultants.)

Tips for Seeking Funds

1. ***Take advantage of grant writing programs.***
Ask for help in writing grants for your program. Many funding agencies have grant writing workshops or offer assistance to applicants preparing proposals. Take advantage before the deadline!

2. ***Ask.***
"Ask and it shall be given unto you." Go into the community **in person** with information on your program. Ask for donations from small businesses, not just the large corporations. Seek in-kind donations for supplies and materials, refreshments, awards, etc. (Metamorphosis in Meridian found donations for props such as a VCR and large-screen tv, programs and printing, and food for the press party and cast party.)

3. ***Spread the funding burden.***
Look for ways to spread the funding burden among a number of donors and to give them something in return for their sponsorship. (Instead of hitting up the banks in town for a major donation, festival planners in Senatobia offered potential corporate sponsors the opportunity to purchase a reserved table for eight at the festival's street dance for $75. More than 35 were sold.)

4. ***Promptly thank all donors.***
Promptly thank all donors and **give recognition and credit** in programs and other printed materials.

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Tips for Preparing a Grant Application

As you write your grant application, you should work to convince the funding agency that you are an effective partner for furthering its common goals in your community.

Thinking and Planning

Give yourself enough time to think clearly and plan carefully your particular project.

1. ***Review the mission and goals of your organization.***
Review the mission goals of your organization and yearly work plan for your organization. Would it be in the public interest for the grantor to support your work financially?

2. ***Review the mission and goals of the funding agency.***
Review the mission and goals of the funding agency. Is the agency a logical funding source for your organization?

3. ***Identify your community's needs.***
Think about the needs of your community. How is your project meeting a particular need? Does the project involve your community? If so, find a concrete way (such as letters of support) to document community support and collaboration.

4. ***Be realistic.***
Be realistic and specific in your plans. Talk to people you want involved in your project before you begin writing. Find out if the people who are to be served by the project (artists, for example) want or need the services your project offers. Involve your community in the planning of the project. Who will benefit from this project? What are the concrete anticipated outcomes?

5. ***Assess costs of the project.***
Assess realistically the costs, personnel needs, and time requirements for your project.

6. ***Create specific plans.***
Create specific plans to get matching funds. Plan for ways to revise the project but still accomplish the project if it receives partial funding.

7. ***Talk to the staff at the funding agency.***
Talk to the staff at the funding agency. Ask them if ideas like yours have been funded in the past. Ask for sample applications. Check with the staff to make sure that the project you are considering is compatible with the funding agency's programs.

8. ***Read the guidelines.***
Read the guidelines for all the grant programs carefully to decide which program best suits your project. Again, call funding agency staff with questions.

Following Instructions

1. ***Review the funding criteria.***
Review the funding criteria for the grant program you have selected. Keep in front of you a copy of the criteria and your organization's mission statement as you write your proposal. Be sure to address all of the criteria in your narrative.

2. ***Observe application requirements.***
Observe length restrictions, rules about attachments, and numbers of copies.

3. ***Gather documentation.***
Gather any documentation you may need (board of directors list, IRS letter, etc.).

4. ***Formulate a realistic budget.***
Formulate a realistic budget. Call the funding agency staff with questions about where to include specific expenses or any other questions.

Writing

1. ***Be concrete.***
Assume that the reader knows nothing about your organization or project except what is presented in the application. Present concrete plans, specific goals, and evidence of adequate research and planning.

2. ***Avoid using jargon.***
Write in simple, clear language.

3. ***Be consistent.***
Make sure that the budget reflects the plans mentioned in your narrative.

4. ***Prepare a budget narrative.***
Prepare a budget narrative that itemizes the income and expense categories presented on the budget page.

5. ***Use "outside" readers.***
Have people who know nothing about your project read your draft. Ask if it makes sense to them. Then have people who were involved in the planning read it. Does the narrative reflect the intentions of your organization's leaders?

6. ***Rewrite.***

7. ***Proofread, proofread, proofread.***

8. ***Meet the deadline.***
Submit your application before the deadline.

Taking time to prepare an exemplary application helps to demonstrate your organization's ability to carry out your plans. Further, writing a successful application demonstrates to corporate or private sources your organization's administrative ability; they will then be more willing to invest in your programs. So, spending time preparing an impressive application is a good investment.

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Tips for Managing a Grant

1. ***Read the materials.***
Read the materials in the grant award package and finalize plans for a great project.

2. ***Sign the grant contracts.***
Have your authorizing official sign the grant contracts. Keep a copy for your file, and return one to the grantor.

3. ***Make a separate file.***
Make a separate file for each grant and label it with the name and grant number of your project. Put a copy of the grant application, the contract, and reporting forms in the file.

4. ***Review your contract.***
Review your contract and final report form. Are there special provisions you need to plan for? Is there any information requested that you should plan to collect?

5. ***Check your mail box.***
Check your mail box regularly. Keep a copy of all correspondence about the grant between you and the grantor in your folder.

6. ***Keep the grantor informed.***
Let the grantor know if you change your address, you get a new project director, or if your authorizing official changes.

7. ***Have grant changes approved.***
Make sure the grantor approves any grant changes before they happen. Use the grant change form.

8. ***Keep a ledger of income and expenses.***
Keep a ledger of income and expenses related to your project. Keep receipts in your folder. Make sure you maintain the account according to generally accepted accounting practices.

9. ***Keep your project file up to date.***
As your project progresses, collect programs, press releases, press clippings, attendance figures, and other important information in your file. Remember to acknowledge the grantor in all of your printed material about the project.

10. ***Mark final report due dates.***
Mark final report due dates on your calendar. Send your final report package on time. Taking time to prepare a thorough, clearly-written final report shows that your organization can carry out successful projects. It also helps you review your organization's activities and plan future activities.

Building on Success

To help you get started, here's how
Artist Is In! began –
and what's planned in Phase Two!

Across Mississippi, the Artist Is In! From historic sites to recreation centers, auditoriums to sports camps, museums to local parks, in festivals, schools, places and spaces, the Artist Is In! Thanks to grant support provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Mississippi Arts Commission, 25 rural and inner-city communities in the state have developed arts programs based on their special needs and resources. Most of these programs will continue in some form, realizing the purpose of the Artist Is In program as developed by the Mississippi Arts Commission: to provide a catalyst for the development of ongoing arts programs in rural and inner-city communities.

Of the nearly 300 communities in Mississippi, only 32 have populations over 10,000. Most people live in small, rural towns of about 1500 to 2000 people. Because these towns are often geographically isolated by farm land, forests and waterways, Mississippians develop strong community ties influenced by demographics, economics and cultural heritage. Just as easy access to supermarkets, movie theatres and department stores is limited (often a two to three-hour drive away), these towns also are limited in arts and cultural venues beyond the pop culture of television and radio.

Meeting the needs of these small, rural communities offers the Mississippi Arts Commission both a challenge and an opportunity to stimulate increased public participation in the arts and expand public understanding of the arts and culture of Mississippi. In 1991 when funds became available through the National Endowment for the Arts' State Programs for arts projects in underserved communities, the Commission seized the opportunity to further arts development in the state with additional resources.

The Artist Is In

The **Artist Is In** program began in 1991 through a 1991-92 NEA States' Arts Projects for Underserved Communities grant and continued with support from NEA States' Arts in Underserved Communities grants in 1992-93 and 1993-94. The goals of the program were

- ***To provide educational opportunities, training, information, and technical assistance to Mississippi artists and presenters;***
- ***To improve the quality of artistic production in community activities;***
- ***To establish partnerships among the Commission, other state agencies and statewide organizations that serve rural and inner-city communities;***
- ***To strengthen planning and cooperation among community groups such as local arts agencies, libraries, convention and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce, economic development councils, Main Street programs, 4-H organizations, home extension services and others;***
- ***To increase leadership and participation of African-Americans, Choctaws and the disabled in artistic activities in their communities; and***
- ***To amplify long-term, community-wide cultural development.***

A Community Advisory Committee was a central force in the program's success. The committee represented rural regions of the state and included not only artists, but also city officials such as a mayor, a county planner, and a city clerk. Members of the committee were Kathleen Braun, Perkinston; Mike Cuevas, Bay St. Louis; Charles Davis, Itta Bena; Ann Abadie, Oxford; Bessie Johnson, West Point; Thallis Lewis, Philadelphia; James Miller, Port Gibson; Danny Pearson, Quitman; Al Branch, Hattiesburg; Jane Rule Burdine, Taylor; Dennis Tobias, McComb; and Marcia Weaver, Vicksburg. The Advisory Committee played a critical role in developing guidelines for the **Artist Is In** program, reviewing applications and making funding recommendations to the Commission.

Applications for this special grants program were solicited from chambers of commerce, parks and recreation departments, cooperative extension agencies, economic development councils, libraries and local arts agencies, among others. The invitation began: "We know that the world is not made up of grant writers and we don't think it should be." Communities indicated their interest in the program, and the Commission provided consultants to work with them to develop their actual applications. This assistance was essential in breaking barriers for organizations previously intimidated by the grants process.

The program's first grants were awarded in April 1992, with $99,724 awarded for eleven projects. Round II funded eight projects in January 1993, for a total of $78,500; and Round III supported another seven beginning in October 1993, for a total of $65,000. Of all projects funded, only one was not able to be carried out—an amazing success rate, given the fact that many of these grants were to fledgling organizations in small communities.

The most exciting aspects of the program were the range and diversity of projects funded, the many fruitful partnerships that have developed among community organizations, and the fact that 21 of the 25 grants have spawned arts activities that will be ongoing in the community. Truly the **Artist Is In** has realized its purpose of serving as a catalyst for the development of ongoing arts programs.

Motivated by the success of the **Artist Is In** program and the reactions and recommendations of the folks in Mississippi, the Mississippi Arts Commission is building on the program by providing opportunities for extended residencies in communities throughout Mississippi. In 1993 the Commission received an NEA Local Art Agencies Program grant to develop an extended residency program for local arts agencies. The Commission also received an NEA State's Underserved Planning Grant to work with Ken Clay, director of cultural diversity at the Kentucky Center for the Arts; Kathie deNobriga, executive director of Alternate ROOTS; and rural communities throughout the state to explore the idea of extended residencies in communities with no established arts programs.

After a year of planning, the Commission is introducing a new program, **Artist Is In Phase Two – Extended Community Residencies.** The program has received funding from the NEA States' Arts In Underserved Communities. Over the next two years the Arts Commission will work in partnership with Mississippi communities that have no current ongoing arts programs to develop an extended community residency program that includes the following elements:

(1) Community Training. ***Communities will select arts leadership teams of eight to ten members that represent the diversity of their community. Leadership teams will begin planning for a residency at a two-day retreat, led by the Brushy Fork Institute. Planning grants will assist these teams to continue planning in their community with the artist and/or a consultant in preparing their proposal for a community residency.***

(2) Artist Training. ***Alternate ROOTS will coordinate a two-day hands-on, skills development retreat for Mississippi artists. Workshops engage artists in discussions about how art makes a difference to audiences and communities, cover the nuts and bolts of developing residency activities, and explore the critical response process of evaluating art. A list of artists who successfully complete the program will be made available to organizations, local arts agencies and community teams interested in developing residency programs.***

(3) Community Residency. ***Communities that successfully complete the community retreat and planning for a 3- to 9-month residency project will compete for $12,000 grants for the residencies. A total of $144,000 will be awarded over the two-year grant period. The Commission and Alternate ROOTS will provide ongoing assistance. Communities will keep a journal of the residency and will use it to evaluate the success of the residency as it relates to their goals and objectives.***

With the **Artist Is In** and **Artist Is In Phase Two – Extended Community Residencies,** the Mississippi Arts Commission is developing new ways to meet the needs of its state. The Commission is achieving its goal of stimulating increased public participation in the arts by empowering small, rural communities to develop their own quality arts programs. The fabric of the arts in Mississippi, and indeed throughout the nation, is richer for these efforts.

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About the Commission

The Mississippi Arts Commission, established in 1968 by the Mississippi State Legislature, is the official grantmaking and service agency to the arts in Mississippi. Funding for the Commission and its program is provided by the State of Mississippi and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

The mission of the Commission is to be a catalyst for the arts in Mississippi through the following goals:

- To support and promote arts education;
- To stimulate increased public participation in the arts and access to the arts by the entire community;
- To expand public understanding and support of arts and culture in Mississippi; and
- To encourage demonstrated excellence in all art forms and disciplines.

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